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EUR/NCE FOR FICHTE, PM/RSAT FOR DOWLEY, OSD/ISP FOR SADOWSKA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/04/2016

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS REQUEST VISIT OF U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE SITE
SURVEY TEAM

REF: A. PRAGUE 636

[1](#)B. 6/29 SADOWSKA - MORGESE/GREANEY E-MAIL

Classified By: Acting Political-Economic Counselor Brian Greaney
for reasons 1.4 b+d.

[1](#)1. (U) Action request in para 9.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Summary: Czech officials have extended an invitation, effective immediately, for the U.S. to begin surveying potential missile defense (MD) sites within the Czech Republic. They are grateful for U.S. patience in delaying the arrival of the survey team from its original date of June 19. National political debate on the issue has now reached a new state of maturity, with both pros and cons being debated in the press by politicians. Political insiders believe that the question of the Czech Republic hosting a MD site would be decided by the Parliament, without recourse to a referendum. The Czech Defense Minister would like to announce the site surveys to the Czech press during the week July 10, and requested that the United States refrain from public comment on the surveys until that time. Post requests a response to the Czech invitation. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Defense Minister Karel Kuehnl met with the Ambassador on the evening of July 03 to discuss next steps on Missile Defense. He acknowledged that further delays in surveying the Czech candidate MD sites might endanger the Czechs' chances to host an MD base. Kuehnl, a supporter of the Czech Republic's candidacy, asked the Ambassador to extend an invitation to the U.S. survey team. He hoped that the team would be able to arrive before the end of July.

[1](#)4. (C/NF) DATT and Acting Polec Counselor met July 4 with Deputy Minister of Defense Martin Belcik, MFA Political Director Martin Povejsil, and MOD Defense Policy Director Radomir Jahoda for further discussion of the Czech invitation. Both Belcik and Povejsil said the temporary delay in the arrival of the U.S. site survey team had allowed the national political debate on MD to mature naturally. They were encouraged by politicians' recent willingness to discuss the merits of the project rather than try to stovepipe public support in one direction or another. They hoped that the level of Czech cooperation to come would help them make up for lost time, and would ensure Czech competitiveness to host an MD site.

[1](#)5. (C/NF) DATT extended an invitation on behalf of DASD Brian Green for a working-level Czech delegation to come to Washington DC to learn more about the MD concept, how it fits into the larger MD structure and its ramifications for the Czech Republic (Ref B). Belcik's initial reaction was

that this should be put off until September, but he said he would consider the offer with the appropriate decision-makers. Povejsil seemed more interested (Note: our impression is that both MOD and MFA would like to get arrangement for the site survey visit over with first before thinking about other meetings. End note).

¶16. (C/NF) Belcik said the MOD would provide its full logistical support to the surveys. He noted that, even during the recent delay, the Ministry had been working quietly on the issue. Belcik presented Emboffs with a package of technical data to answer many of the questions posed by the Missile Defense Agency in pre-survey negotiations. (Note: The MOD's Defense Policy Department hopes to provide the answers to all remaining questions before the arrival of the survey team). Jahoda suggested that we use the same schedule for the survey team as had originally been proposed for the visit that was to begin June 19.

¶17. (C/NF) In response to Emboffs' question on certain politicians' calls for a referendum on MD, Povejsil said talk of such a referendum had merely been a political tactic as part of ongoing negotiations in forming a new government. He commented on the difficulty of arranging a referendum under a Constitution that did not authorize such a procedure, noting that all politicians were equally aware of the difficulties such a path would entail. Povejsil said that while the parties might conduct internal polls of their own elected representatives, the eventual decision would fall to the Parliament and not the people. Povejsil said he was encouraged by the level of public statements of support for MD by many political leaders.

¶18. (C/NF) Povejsil commented that some recent press

reporting on MD tended to portray the issue as a choice for the Czech people between support for a U.S. system or for a NATO system. He asked that U.S. officials, if speaking on the issue, clarify to reporters that support for the U.S. project was not something that would undermine NATO's efforts.

¶19. (C/NF) Comment and action request: This invitation to the U.S. site survey team is an encouraging step. Even though Czech leaders are engaged in the delicate dance of forming a new coalition government, they have also begun to conduct a public discussion on the way forward for Czech participation in missile defense. While eventual support is by no means guaranteed, recent interviews and op-eds demonstrate that several prominent politicians are willing to take a public stand in favor MD. Their opponents are divided. Some of the opposition to MD has little to do with MD itself, and is focused on the rights of citizens to have their views represented on such issues. Such a criticism will become less effective as the current political debate continues. Post requests a response to the Czech invitation. End comment and action request.

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